

# Fulbright Program Celebrates 60 Years of Educational Exchanges

By LAURINDA KEYS LONG

Since the Fulbright Program was established in 1946, under legislation introduced in the U.S. Congress by Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas, it has provided more than 267,500 participants the chance to study, teach and conduct research in a foreign country. Most of these were non-Americans.

"Fulbright is responsible for the greatest movement of scholars across the face of the Earth since the fall of Constantinople in 1453," commented R.B. McCallum, a master at Pembroke College, Oxford University, where Fulbright himself had benefited from studying abroad as a Rhodes Scholar. Although Fulbright sometimes got undue credit for funding the scholarship program, one of the largest academic and cultural exchange programs in the world, it was originally financed by U.S. foreign currency reserves available at the end of World War II. Today it is directly paid for



*Senator Fulbright (right) visited India in October 1958 to attend the World Bank and International Monetary Fund Conference in New Delhi, along with a U.S. trade delegation. The senator and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru each received a bust of Nehru sculpted by Mack Greene (second from left), a Fulbright exchange professor who was teaching at YMCA college in Chennai. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker is at far left.*

## USEFI activities include:

- ✓ Administration of Fulbright Fellowships and other scholarship exchange programs for Indian and American students, faculty and professionals
- ✓ Promotion of dialogue among Fulbrighters and their communities as an outgrowth of educational exchange
- ✓ Educational Advising Services for Indians interested in higher education in the United States

by American taxpayers, with cost-sharing, tax rebates and other forms of in-kind support from participating universities and some of the 150 countries where the program operates.

The Fulbright Program was extended to India on February 2, 1950, when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Amba-

sador Loy Henderson signed an agreement to promote mutual understanding between Indians and Americans "by a wider exchange of knowledge and professional talents, through educational contacts." The agreement created the United States Educational Foundation in India (USEFI), administered by a 10-person board chosen by the Indian government and the U.S. Embassy.

More than 4,000 Indian and 3,600 American scholars have participated in the U.S.-India Fulbright exchanges since 1950, and about 200 Fulbrighters come and go each year, plus participants in other fellowships and scholarships administered by USEFI.

Fulbright's own experience of the value of exposure to another culture in an educational setting was reinforced over the years as he met thousands of Fulbrighters who had similarly benefited from the law he introduced on August 1, 1946. Among them are 34 Nobel Prize winners "who credit their success, in large measure, to the international experience they had through schol-

arship," says Harriet Fulbright, the senator's widow, who was in India in October to speak at a conference on providing education to the very poor and disadvantaged. "What I hear, every time a Fulbrighter comes to me, is, 'My life was transformed,'" says Mrs. Fulbright, an educator who has lived in Colombia, South Korea and the Soviet Union. The couple met when she was appointed executive director of the Fulbright Association in Washington, D.C.

Her husband had said "that this program grew faster and succeeded in what he wanted more than he ever even dreamed possible," says Mrs. Fulbright, "and towards the

end of his life, which was an extraordinary life, having done an amazing number of things, he felt that the Fulbright Program is his most important contribution.”

Fulbright died on February 9, 1995, at the age of 89. He is the longest serving chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, participating in historic decision-making during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Cold War and the Vietnam War from 1959 to 1974. He was a Senator for 30 years. Fulbright was born into wealth in a small town, Sumner, Missouri. At 16, he entered the University of Arkansas, where he became president at 34. He worked as a lawyer in private practice, for the Justice Department and as a law school instructor. As a freshman Congressman in 1943, Fulbright introduced a resolution urging U.S. participation in an international organization to maintain peace—even though peace was not yet in sight, *TIME* magazine wrote in a January 1965 profile, when it placed him on its cover. The resolution was adopted, easing the way for creation of the United Nations.

Fulbright saw the exchange program as an important tool for foreign policy, especially as a step toward building alternatives to armed conflict. “Educational exchange is not merely one of those nice but marginal activities in which

## The Price of Empire

by J. William Fulbright  
is available at the American Library in  
Mumbai and Chennai.

we engage in international affairs, but rather, from the standpoint of future world peace and order, probably the most important and potentially rewarding of our foreign-policy activities,” he wrote in his book *The Price of Empire*.

“What he wanted to do was to educate future potential leaders to understand that there are many different ways of being and interacting in this world and not just the way they were brought up with,” says Mrs. Fulbright. “And if they went to a different country to confront a different way of being, they would then be not only more willing but more able to interact with that person of a different culture. Every U.S. administration, including the present one, has valued the Fulbright Program extraordinarily as a tremendous tool for cultural diplomacy. And they feel that the value of this program far outweighs the cost of it.”

Fulbright put his view into practice during the Cold War, she says: “He invited Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin over to his home on a regular basis because he felt that, of course, it is very important to keep one’s friends close but it was even more important to find out what one’s enemies are thinking. And so he kept in close touch with Ambassador Dobrynin. He happened to like him. And he would also invite his Senate colleagues and many of them simply refused to sit at the same table with Ambassador Dobrynin. But I am absolutely convinced that our (U.S.-Soviet) relationship was the better for Fulbright’s regular interaction.”

Mrs. Fulbright’s visit to India came at the invitation of the National Board for Certified Counselors, as keynote speaker for its Global Conference on Mental Health in New Delhi. She shared examples and research from American schools that have made breakthroughs in teaching children in difficult situations, such as the very poor, those without parental support or whose native language is not English.

“In these schools they have generally found that education must be accompanied by community building,” she says.

“In other words, part of your education is how to get along with one another and this is incredibly important when you don’t have parents who are around enough to be able to teach you how to do that. The second thing is active participation. It is vitally important that the child not sit and get talked at by the teacher, not understanding half of what is being said, but actually participates, through the use of chants and songs throughout the class period.”

Her message is: “Kids from very poor families can learn every bit as well as middle class and rich kids and...schools that

### More Information

- ✓ For fellowship announcements  
[www.fulbright-india.org](http://www.fulbright-india.org)
- ✓ For information on studying in the United States  
[www.educationusa.state.gov](http://www.educationusa.state.gov)
- ✓ State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
<http://exchanges.state.gov>
- ✓ Policy guidelines established by the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board  
<http://exchanges.state.gov/education/fulbright/ffsb>

### Harriet Fulbright

is president of the J. William and Harriet Fulbright Center, established in early 2006. Its Web site ([www.jwhfulbright.org](http://www.jwhfulbright.org)) started up in September. The center aims to increase the knowledge and visibility of Fulbright’s ideas and implement programs that further them, to promote world peace and non-violent means of resolving conflicts through international collaborations and education programs. The center’s first activity was to produce a DVD documentary on Fulbright’s life, available through the Web site. Mrs. Fulbright is now raising money to make his papers available on line, starting with his speeches, now stored at the library of the University of Arkansas.



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know how to do this are, as far as I’m concerned, making daily miracles.”

Mrs. Fulbright had direct experience of this when she was assigned to teach English to young children from Japan, Finland and Norway at the Anglo-American School in Moscow. “I didn’t speak any of these languages,” she recalled. “After three totally sleepless nights, I realized that I learned the alphabet with a song. So, I taught them through nursery rhyme singing. I taught them through a game of charades which had us weeping with laughter half the time. I taught them by drawing pictures and labeling them. I’d say, ‘You tell me what that is in Norwegian and I will tell you what it is in English.’ And by the end, they all spoke, wrote and read English and they had fun doing it.”

Senator Fulbright often stated that democracy can only flourish under a thoughtful, responsible and educated citizenry, Mrs. Fulbright says. “He was talking about teaching through all our intelligences so that all people can learn in ways best suited to them, so that lifelong learning becomes a universal given.”